

Comments to Busa Land Use Proposal Committee – January 5th, 2011

On behalf of the Recreation Committee, I would like to thank the members of the Busa Land Use Proposal Committee for the many hours that have been dedicated to this process.

At the December 16 meeting, Committee members stated their support for a community farm and the inclusion of some affordable housing on the Busa land. The Recreation Committee is very disappointed with this decision in light of our pivotal role in this whole process.

In May 2009, the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) presented a request to a special session of Town Meeting to purchase the Busa land with \$4.1 million in CPA funds. The goals and objectives of this proposal, which was supported unanimously by all members of the CPC, were as follows:

- Acquire property for recreational open space (active or passive) and community housing
- Preserve an important connecting parcel of open space in East Lexington
- Create a neighborhood park for Lexington residents with a much-needed multi-purpose field and a small playground.
- Improve conditions on the site to better protect wetlands, including keeping the wetland resource area and buffers protected and in their natural state
- Create a greenway corridor linking the site with adjacent open space areas, such as Rindge Park and the Minuteman Bikeway
- Create affordable housing
- Create an opportunity for additional community gardens

Under this proposal, 31,000 square feet off of Lowell Street would be designated for community housing and the remainder of the 7.9 acres of land would be designated for recreational purposes and open space, which could include community gardens.

In the spirit of doing what is in the best interest of the community, the Recreation Committee has always supported the concept of multiple-uses on the Busa land. We have never requested that all of the Busa land be used for recreational purposes. Our concept plan for Recreation presented on November 4, 2010, proposed a neighborhood park consisting of one multi-use athletic field, a playground, picnic area, trails, and parking be included on the Busa land. By our estimation, the amount of land needed to incorporate all of the recreational features would be approximately 3.5 acres, which means the remaining 4.4 acres could be utilized for other uses such as affordable housing, community gardens, and/or a community farm.

The Recreation Committee has provided you with the information on how a multi-use neighborhood park would benefit the community, and specifically, the great need that Lexington has for an additional athletic field. Despite these factors, members of the committee choose to believe that a full-size field would be too large and not the best use

of the Busa land. When we suggested the possibility of an intermediate-size field, members of the BLUPC commented that this wouldn't make sense because it wouldn't meet the needs for a full-size field. It appears that this option was not given serious consideration by the BLUPC.

Near the conclusion of the meeting on December 16th, it was suggested that the Recreation Department think of some passive recreation features that could be included on the Busa land that don't require much area, such as walking trails. Given that the Recreation Department staff has spent hundreds of hours making our case for a neighborhood park and preparing the concept plan presentation - offering this minimal participation seems disingenuous and rather insulting.

We continue to believe that the Busa land was purchased with \$4.1 million of CPA funds to fulfill the accepted needs of the Town: #1 an athletic field, #2 affordable housing, and #3 open space. A community farm does not meet these Town needs.